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ABSTRACT

This teaching guide emphasizes the similarity of themes in black African and black American literature and the contribution black writers have made to American literature. It is part of the Louisville Area Ethnic Heritage Studies Project described in ED 150 043. The project materials are designed to foster communication across intercultural/ethnic lines. The objectives of this unit are to recognize common themes in black African and black American literature and to appreciate several literary selections by black American authors as representative of their contribution. Planned as a supplement for an English course, suggested time to allocate for the unit is at least two weeks. The guide includes a pretest, a posttest, and four behavioral objectives accompanied by instructional strategies and facilitating materials. These encourage defining terms, reading, discussion, and writing compositions and reports, among other activities. A bibliography of resources is appended. (Author/CK)

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ETHNIC STUDIES

THEMES IN BLACK AFRICAN AND BLACK AMERICAN LITERATURE

Experimental Unit

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ETHNIC HERITAGE PROJECT

1976-1977

Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, Kentucky

SP 011 777

ETHNIC HERITAGE STUDIES: THEMES IN BLACK AFRICAN AND BLACK AMERICAN LITERATURE

Experimental Unit, 1977

Preliminary Draft

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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FOREWORD

Recognizing the value of an ethnic studies program as a vehicle for promoting positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, Jefferson County Public Schools curriculum writers and teachers, in conjunction with representatives of the University of Louisville and the Bicentennial Committee of the Louisville Chamber of Commerce, have examined present ethnic studies courses of the Jefferson County Public Schools and have developed components for these courses.

Funded by the United States Office of Education, the newly developed units focus on increasing understanding and appreciation of the diversity among ethnic groups represented in the Greater Louisville community.

The units will be tested and evaluated in pilot classrooms during the 1976-1977 school year.

Ernest C. Grayson
Superintendent
Jefferson County Public Schools

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RATIONALE FOR ETHNIC STUDIES

The recognition of cultural pluralism as intrinsic in society in the United States is receiving increased attention from the nation's educators who realize that cultural diversity manifests itself daily in the classroom and often is the source of communication breakdown, misunderstanding, and conflict.

Consequently, school systems across the country are seeking to develop a variety of curriculum offerings that will deal with this cultural diversity in substantive and affirmative ways.

The Jefferson County Public Schools became directly involved in this search as the result of a grant from the United States Office of Education for the development of an Ethnic Studies Program in local schools. The grant resulted from a joint proposal by the University of Louisville, the Jefferson County Public Schools, and the Louisville Chamber of Commerce.

To meet grant guidelines, a curriculum writing committee comprised of local instructional leaders and teachers met during the months of July and August, 1976, to develop criteria for an ethnic studies program, to analyze present ethnic studies courses, to construct model units for implementation in county classrooms, and to plan ethnic fairs in six county schools.

PROGRAM CRITERIA

The Curriculum Writing Committee for the Ethnic Studies Program believes that an Ethnic Studies Program should cross disciplinary lines throughout the curriculum and must include the examination of major ethnic groups represented in American society.

The committee further believes that the specific characteristics listed below mark a definitive ethnic studies program and should be reflected, in varying degrees, in individual ethnic studies courses.

Characteristics

An Ethnic Studies Program, logically:

1. Emphasizes the universality of human needs
2. Explores the experiences and contributions of ethnic groups
3. Analyzes the relationships between ethnic groups
4. Develops a historical perspective of ethnic groups
5. Provides a balanced accurate and impartial treatment of ethnic groups
6. Analyzes ethnic myths and stereotypes
7. Contains interdisciplinary elements
8. Explores future prospects of ethnic groups
9. Endorses the principle of social equality of individuals
10. Focuses on attitudes and values of ethnic groups
11. Promotes individual self-awareness and feelings of self worth
12. Seeks accommodation, appreciation and acceptance of cultural diversity

Unit Title: _____

Unit Description/Purpose: _____

_____

	YES	NO	NOT APPLICABLE
Emphasizes the universality of human needs			
Explores the experiences and contributions of ethnic groups			
Analyzes the relationships between ethnic groups			
Develops a historical perspective of ethnic groups			
Provides a balanced accurate and impartial treatment of ethnic groups			
Analyzes ethnic myths and stereotypes			
Contains interdisciplinary elements			
Explores future prospects of ethnic groups			
Endorses the principle of social equality of individuals			
Focuses on attitudes and values of ethnic groups			
Promotes individual self-awareness and feelings of self worth			
Seeks accommodation, appreciation and acceptance of cultural diversity			

ETHNIC STUDIES: THEMES IN BLACK AFRICAN AND BLACK AMERICAN LITERATURE

Description of the Unit

This unit emphasizes the similarity of themes in Black African and Black American literature and the contribution Black writers have made to American literature. It is offered as a supplement to English 469.

Suggested Time

At least two weeks

General Objectives

Recognizes the similarity of themes common to both Black African and Black American literature.

Recognizes and appreciates several literary selections by Black American authors as representative of the contribution these writers have made to American literature.

Concepts

Literary theme	Black American
Heritage	Black African

PRETEST

Themes in Black African and Black American Literature

Your responses to these statements will enable you and your teacher to assess the information you have concerning Black writers and their works.

1. State the names of two Black African writers.

2. State the names of two Black American writers.

3. State the name of a Black writer whose book you have read. State the title of the book.

4. Write a one-sentence definition of the word theme as it applies to literature.

5. Circle the themes that most often appear in works written by Black writers.

Jealousy	Despair	Nature
Love	Pride	Death
Peace	Equality	Beauty
Joy	Justice	Loneliness

6. Who wrote Raisin in the Sun?

Behavioral Objective 1

Having read and discussed themes of three or more poems, myths, and stories of Black African origin, the student will write a one-sentence definition of the term theme and will identify themes (e.g., peace, love, hate, justice, equality) in each of the selections studied.

Instructional Strategies	Facilitating Materials
Administer the pretest.	Pretest, p. 2.
Explain the terms Black American and Black African. Use a world map to point out African countries. Have students read or listen to a section on tribal life from Roots by Alex Haley. Discuss the concept literary heritage.	Haley, Alex. Roots
Discuss the meaning of themes. Have students write a definition of the word themes and make a list of themes frequently found in literature. Read and discuss "Our Backs Are Breaking." Ask each student to list three or more themes found in the poem. Allow students to read their answers aloud.	Stanford, Barbara D., and Stanford, Gene. Mix, p. 119. _____. Changes, pp. 45-46. Turnbull, Colin M. Tradition and Change in African Tribal Life, p. 31.
Assign several students topics pertaining to Black African culture. Have the class read "The Brave Man of Golo" from Changes. Ask students who looked up information on African culture to share the information with the class. Engage students in a discussion of the customs noted in the "The Brave Man of Golo." Ask students to write a short summary of the main ideas expressed in the story.	Stanford, Barb[illegible] D., and Stanford, Gene. Changes, pp. 45-46.
Assign other selections of Black African origin for individual and group study. Have students prepare a chart showing the author, title, and themes of each selection studied.	
Have students write compositions discussing the dominant themes found in Black African literature.	

Behavioral Objective 2

Having read and discussed three or more poems, stories, and plays written by American authors, the student will identify themes in each selection studied.

Instructional Strategies	Facilitating Materials
Have students listen to a recording of Black American poetry. Provide time for student discussion of the main themes expressed in the recording. Ask students to read "We Wear the Mask." Have students list three or more themes expressed in the poem. Ask several students to share their list with the class by reading orally or by writing them on the board.	Johnson, James W. God's Trombone. (recording) Bontemps, Arna. American Negro Poetry.
Assign other selections written by Black American authors (e.g., "The Black Man Talks of Reaping," "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "The Explorer," scenes from Raisin in the Sun). Have students participate in oral reading activities, using any of the works studied.	Ibid. Hughes, Langston. Selected Poems of Langston Hughes. Hansberry, Lorraine. Raisin in the Sun.
Have students prepare a chart showing the author, title, and themes of each selection studied.	Negro Views of America.
Have students write a short summary of the dominant themes found in Black American literature.	

Behavioral Objective 3

Having read, discussed, and prepared written assignments on themes in Black African and Black American literature, the student will compare, in a 3.8 paragraph, the dominant themes found in Black African literature and Black American literature and cite examples to support her/his views.

Instructional Strategies	Facilitating Materials
Divide the class into groups of three or more students. Provide class time for a discussion of the dominant themes discovered in the selection just completed. (Allow about ten minutes for discussion.)	

Instructional Strategies	Facilitating Materials
After the discussion, ask students to submit one paper from each group which expresses the group's opinion regarding the dominant themes in either the Black African literature or the Black American literature.	
Ask students to cite specific works to support their point of view.	
During a class sharing session ask students to compile their information and put the results on the chalkboard.	

Behavioral Objective 4

Given a list of ten titles of literary selections, the student will identify five of the titles as being representative of contributions made to American literature by Black authors by naming the authors.

Instructional Strategies	Facilitating Materials
Have students read excerpts or complete works written by any of the following authors: Paul L. Dunbar Richard Wright Langston Hughes Gwendolyn Brooks Ralph Ellison Arna Bontemps Countee Cullen James Baldwin James W. Johnson Jean Toomer Lorraine Hansberry	Brooks, Charlotte. <u>The Outnumbered</u>. Bontemps, Arna. <u>Golden Slippers</u>. Patterson, Lindsay. <u>An Introduction to Black American Literature</u>. Turner, Mary. <u>We, Too, Belong</u>.
Give students suggestions for making reports on their reading. Hav each student prepare a report or demonstration of the selections of his/her choice.	
Administer a post test.	Post Test, p. 6.

POST TEST

Themes in Black African and Black American Literature

1. Write a one-sentence definition of the term theme as it applies to literature.

2. Write a one-to-two word explanation of the themes of each of the following literary selections. (The teacher should list here the selections read and discussed in class. Select both Black African and Black American titles.)

3. Compare, in a 3.8 paragraph, the three dominant themes found in Black African literature and Black American literature. Cite examples from the literature of each source to support the comparisons. Use the following model for your thesis statement: "Black American and Black African writers both use the themes of _____, _____, and _____."

4. From the ten titles listed below, identify the five selections written by Black authors by placing the name of the author next to the work he/she wrote. (The teacher should list here ten titles, five of which represent writings of Black authors studied in class.)

RESOURCES*

Recording

Johnson, James W. God's Trombones. Folkways Records and Service Corp., n.d.

Books

Baldwin, James. Go Tell It On the Mountain. New York: Dial Press, 1953.

_____. Nobody Knows My Name. New York: Dial Press, 1961.

Bontemps, Arna, ed. American Negro Poetry. Rev. ed. New York: Hill & Wang, Inc., 1974.
Partial Contents: Bontemps, Arna. "The Black Man Talks of Reaping."
Bontemps, Arna. "Close Your Eyes."
Brooks, Gwendolyn. "Piano After War."
Dunbar, Paul L. "The Debt."
Hughes, Langston. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers."
Hughes, Langston. "I Dream a World."
Hughes, Langston. "Mother to Son."

_____. Golden Slippers: An Anthology of Negro Poetry. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1941.

Brooks, Charlotte. The Outnumbered. New York: Delacorte Press, 1969.

Ellison, Ralph. The Invisible Man. Westminster, Md.: Random House, Inc., 1951. (Prologue)

Haley, Alex. Roots. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976.

Hansberry, Lorraine. Raisin in the Sun. New York: New American Library, 1961.

Hughes, Langston. Selected Poems of Langston Hughes. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1959. (Available in paperback from Random House, Inc.)

Johnson, James Weldon, ed. The Book of American Negro Poetry. Rev. ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1931.
Partial Contents: Cullen, Countee. "From the Dark Tower."
Cullen, Countee. "Tableau."

Negro Views of America. Columbus, Ohio: Xerox Educational Publications, n.d.

Patterson, Lindsay. An Introduction to Black Literature in America. Philadelphia: United Publishing Corp., n.d.

*The Abbreviation o.p. following an entry means that the item is not currently available for purchase. Many school and public libraries, however, already have copies of these materials.

Stanford, Barbara D., and Stanford, Gene. Mix. Variations: A Contemporary Literature Program Series. Rev. ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975.

_____. Changes. Variations: A Contemporary Literature Program Series. Rev. ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975.

Toomer, Jean. Cane. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1969.

Turner, Mary, ed. We, Too, Belong: An Anthology About Minorities. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1969.

Turnbull, Colin M. Tradition and Change in African Tribal Life. Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Company, 1966. c.p.

Wright, Richard. Eight Men. New York: Pyramid Publications, Inc., 1969.

_____. Native Son. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1969.

BOOK SELECTION AND REEVALUATION POLICY

Objectives

The primary objective of the school materials center is to implement, enrich and support the educational program of the school.

The school materials center should contribute to the social, intellectual, cultural and spiritual development of the students.

Selection

Materials for the school materials center should be selected by librarians in consultation with administrators, supervisors, faculty members, students and parents.

Reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids should be consulted as guides.

Criteria for selection

Selection should consider the needs of the individual school based on a knowledge of the curriculum and on requests from administrators and teachers.

Consideration should be given to individual students based on a knowledge of elementary and secondary youth and on requests of parents and students.

Selection should provide for a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, with a diversity of appeal and the presentation of different points of view.

The instructional materials should have high literary value.

Materials should have superior format.

Jefferson County Public Schools. Key to Policies and Procedures for Librarians. Louisville, Ky.: Jefferson County Board of Education, 1969.

BOOK SELECTION AND MATERIAL REEVALUATION PROCEDURES

Revised June 27, 1969

We seek to educate young people in the democratic tradition, to foster a recognition of individual freedom and social responsibility, to inspire meaningful awareness of and respect for the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and to instill appreciation of the values of individual personality. It is recognized that these democratic values can best be transmitted in an atmosphere which is free from censorship and artificial restraints upon free inquiry and learning and in which academic freedom for teacher and student is encouraged.

It is further recognized that there are areas of such a controversial or questionable nature that some restraints upon complete academic freedom are necessary.

The Jefferson County Board of Education wishes to meet ignorance, hatred and prejudice not with more ignorance, hatred and prejudice; but with understanding, goodness, and reason. Therein no individual will be allowed to impose his personal views in any subject area, and the best professional behavior and individual thought will be expected at all times. When political, moral or social problems arise within the classroom as topics of discussion or study, opportunities for opposing points of view must be provided.

The Board of Education does not advocate a policy of censorship, but a practice of judicious selection of materials to be used with students in the classrooms of Jefferson County Public Schools, and wants only to be helpful to the teachers in providing good learning experiences for boys and girls. Teachers shall use prudent judgment in determining whether materials are of such nature and shall submit items to their principal and supervisors for approval before inclusion in their instructional programs. Should such material be selected for inclusion in a teacher's curriculum guide, and objections to same evolve, the Board insists upon the following.

Individuals involved will be provided an opportunity to discuss the matter fully with local school personnel.

The materials reevaluation procedure will be initiated and conclusions reported to the school and individuals involved. See attached BOOK SELECTION AND MATERIALS REEVALUATION POLICY.

With reference to library books per se and book selection, the form used in 1963-69 and the years before may be used. See attached CITIZEN'S REQUEST FOR REEVALUATION OF MATERIAL.

Furthermore, in recognition of the scope of this problem, the Board encourages the administrations of the local schools to form panels of qualified persons, appointed fairly (e.g., teacher, parents and other school and community representatives) to consider materials to be used in the curriculums that might have an adverse effect on students. In addition, the Board suggests that individual school departments be encouraged to consider, read and review all supplementary curricular inclusions that might be offensive politically, socially or otherwise.

BOOK SELECTION AND MATERIALS REEVALUATION POLICY

Individuals, organizations, or groups who challenge or criticize instructional materials shall be asked to complete the form Citizen's Request for Reevaluation of Material comparable to that suggested by the National Council of Teachers of English.

After completing the above mentioned form, a school committee composed of the teacher in the subject area, the principal, the supervisor and the librarian shall review with the complainant the written criticisms and attempt to reach a decision concerning the complaint.

If a decision is not reached which is satisfactory to the complainant, the principal shall request the Associate Superintendent for Instruction to delegate a central committee to review and make a final decision concerning the disposition of the complaint. This decision will be reported back to the principal by the Associate Superintendent for Instruction. This central committee shall be composed of an administrator, a supervisor in the subject area under question, a classroom teacher in the subject area, the Coordinator of Library Services and a mature* parent, preferably from the school district from which the complaint orginates. No member of the central committee shall have been a member of the local school committee with the exception of the supervisor.

The materials involved shall have been withdrawn from general circulation and use pending a decision in writing by the central committee.

However, in the event the complainant does not concur with the decision, he may request that this child be excused from any contact with the objectionable subject matter. Such requests will be honored.

*The word mature in this context applies to all members of the committee and means highly developed or advanced in intellect, moral qualities and outlook.

The materials center in each school should have on file "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Book" from The Students' Right to Read. Reprinted by permission of the National Council of Teachers of English, October 16, 1963.

CITIZEN'S REQUEST FOR REEVALUATION OF MATERIAL

Type of Material _____Book _____Filmstrip _____Lecture _____Film _____Record _____Other

Author (if known) _____

Title _____

Publisher (if known) _____

Request initiated by _____

Telephone _____ Address _____

Complainant represents:

_____himself

_____organizations (Name) _____

_____other group (Name) _____

1. To what in the material do you object? (Please be specific) _____

_____

2. What do you feel might be the result of exposure to the material? _____

_____

3. For what age group would you recommend this material? _____

4. Is there anything good about this material? _____

5. Did you inspect all of this material carefully? _____ What parts? _____

_____

6. Are you aware of the judgment of this material by critics? _____

7. What do you believe is the theme or main idea in this material? _____

_____

8. Which of the following would you like the school to do with this material?

_____refrain from assigning it to your child

_____withdraw it from all students

_____refer it to the committee for reevaluation

9. In its place, what material, if any, would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of our civilization? _____

_____

Signature of Complainant _____

The Ethnic Heritage Studies Project is sponsored by the Jefferson County Public School System, the University of Louisville, and the Louisville Bicentennial Corporation of the Chamber of Commerce and is partially funded by the United States Office of Education. The unit is being used exclusively by selected teachers in the Jefferson County Public Schools.